R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 951 CG 000 719

THE MAKING OF A COUNSELOR, STEP ONE--RE-EDUCATION.

BY- KIEFFER, KENNETH F.
NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIV., DURHAM, GRADUATE SCHOOL

PUB DATE 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.64 16P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CATHOLICS, *COUNSELING, *CHANGING ATTITUDES, THEORIES, PRIESTS, NONDIRECTIVE COUNSELING, *RELIGION, *BELIEFS, JOURNAL ARTICLES, CARL ROGERS

A CATHOLIC PRIEST DESCRIBES HIS MOVE FROM THE ADVICE GIVING TECHNIQUES INCULCATED IN SEMINARY TRAINING TO SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF COUNSELING THEORIES. HISTORICALLY, THE CLERGY HAS BEEN SUSPICIOUS OF PERSONALITY AND MENTAL HEALTH THEORIES. A PATERNAL, AUTHORITARIAN APPROACH TO THE PARISHIONER'S PROBLEMS HAS BEEN THE PRACTICE. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL IN 1965 ENCOURAGED AN AWARENESS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH WITH STATEMENTS THAT SEEMED TO SUGGEST KNOWLEDGE OF CARL ROGERS AND HIS COUNSELING THEORY. THE EMPHASIS OF ROGERIAN THEORY ON THE SELF AS THE DIRECTING FORCE IN BEHAVIOR, AND UPON THE IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY, ARE IN ACCORD WITH CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. HOWEVER, THERE ARE TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INCLUDING ORIGINAL SIN AND GRACE WHICH MUST FIT INTO A THEORETICAL RATIONALE BEFORE A PRIEST CAN ACCEPT ROGERIAN THEORY. THERE IS ALSO THE SUGGESTION OF NATURALISM IN ROGER'S SELF-ACTUALIZATION PRINCIPLE TO BE STUDIED IN LIGHT OF THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT. THROUGH INTELLECTUAL STUDY AND INSIGHT INTO COUNSELING THEORY, THE PRIEST USED NEW AND MORE EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES TO HELP PEOPLE. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARS IN PERSPECTIVES ON COUNSELING, VOLUME 1, NO. 1, SPRING, 1966, PP. 36-45. (NS)

ED012951

PERSPECTIVES ON COUNSELING

An occasional journal devoted to the exposition of some of the significant writings of graduate students involved in the

Counselor Education Program
Department of Education
Graduate School
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

CG 000 719

PERSPECTIVES

ON

COUNSELING

Volume 1

Number 1

Spring, 1966

Counselor Education Program
Department of Education
Graduate School
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

CONTENTS

THE DIRECTIVE LESS-DIRECTIVE DICHOTOMY AS VIEWED FROM THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY by John W. McCarthy Page 1

PARENT CHILD INTERACTION AND VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW OF THEORY AND RESEARCH by Alan E. White Page 13

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPT OF EMPATHY by John F. Stohrer Page 26

THE MAKING OF A COUNSELOR, STEP ONE: RE-EDUCATION by Rev. Kenneth F. Kieffer, O.F.M. Page 36

FOREWORD

There exists a tendency to value only the writings of established experts as having relevance and meaning in our professional world. This is unfortunate, since the person involved in the educational process of becoming a counselor often possesses a refreshing perspective on some of the fundamental issues surrounding the art and science of counseling.

It is the purpose of this occasional journal to share and give exposition to some of these significant writings so that their value will not be lost in the musty files of the ivory tower.

Angelo V. Boy, Editor
Associate Professor of Education
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

THE MAKING OF A COUNSELOR
STEP ONE: RE-EDUCATION

by
Rev. Kenneth F. Kieffer, O.F.M.

After fourteen years of intense spiritual and intellectual training, I emerged from the seminary to begin my career as a minister of God. I enjoyed the respect of the faithful who look upon their priest not only as "another Christ" but also as a "walking encyclopedia"--a person with all the answers. Much of the priest's time is spent helping parishioners with their personal problems. When they came to me for help because of some emotional distress, I would draw from my "vast store" of knowledge concerning human nature with its manifold aspects and dispense the appropriate advice. The scrupulous was told she could not depend upon her own judgment and so would have to follow the decisions of her confessor. The alcoholic was advised to take the pledge. The young boy, plagued with the problem of personal morality, was emphatically informed that he would have to try harder. With the help of God's grace he could succeed in overcoming his problem. If the problems continued, it was concluded (logically?) that the expert advice was being ignored. That these problems were symptomatic of deeper personal disturbances, or that the wooden advice dispensing approach might be inadequate, never entered my mind.

Questioning the validity of the advice-giving technique began during the two-month training period at Chaplains' School. It started with the chance reading of Counseling the Catholic.[1] This monumental work was the first attempt to provide a simple outline of fundamental counseling concepts and techniques for priests faced with daily appeals

for help from parishioners with personal problems. The co-authors hoped to arouse an interest in the clergy, particualrly seminary professors, to do something about their lack of formal education in the field of counseling. Although it took several years for their message to penetrate the hard crust of paternal intellectualism, I eventually began to investigate the various theories of counseling.

My advice-giving method was completely shattered when I began my tour of duty with the U. S. Naval Disciplinary Command. Despite my "good advice," the prisoners continued to get into trouble. When it became apparent that they were really trying to follow the advice given, but without success, I faced up to the fact that people do not change because they have acquired the proper intellectual knowledge that they should change. There were obviously certain affective hurdles that had to be removed before they could function in a more adequate manner. How to take away these hurdles, these emotional blocks? Counseling seemed to offer a solution. So this author enrolled in counselor education courses.

It was a tremendously new experience and I sought to obtain a general view of as many theories as possible in hopes of discovering "the best method." However, counseling seems to be such a very personal affair between the counselor and the counselee, that I discovered a variety of individual approaches from the analytic to the client-centered. It seemed more logical for the neophyte to gain an over-all view of the field of counseling before specializing in any one approach. On the other hand, it may have been clerical caution, although unconscious, that prompted me to proceed slowly. It is not an easy task to cast off the effects of an educational system, based on hundreds of years of experience, a system which had had serious reservations about certain theories of personality and mental health.

The sad experience of having an uneducated clergy led the Fathers attending the Council of Trent, in 1545, to draw up rigid rules concerning the training of seminarians.

> We touch on one of the great mysteries of medieval Catholicism, not that there were bad priests, but that the Church never faced the problem of training and educating the rank and file of the parochial clergy....Here, more than in any other point, with Trent a new age begins.[2]

From that time on, the education of the future priest was of the utmost concern as subsequent decrees and regulations clearly indicate. He was to be not only a holy man, but also a person well versed in the secular sciences. As a result of Church legislation, the seminarian spent years studying philosophy and psychology, emphasizing particularly the basic nature of man with his volitional and intellectual faculties. With this philosophic background, the student moved on to theology which considers man from a religious point of view, his fallen nature, its elevation through grace and his relationship to Almighty God. The newly ordained priest emerged from the seminary as one of the best educated, professional men of his times.

It was only natural that the people would come to the parish priest for help. They had a deep respect for the clergy because of their office and their intense intellectual training. The alcoholic, the neurotic, the scrupulous, the saint, and the sinner, all came to the priest for advice. Imbued with the thought that he understood human nature because of his philosophic and theological training, and encouraged by the faith of his parishioners who continually came for assistance, the priest became the dispenser of advice geared to solve all types of problems. This paternal, authoritorian approach to many problems, plus an over-emphasis on the possibility of strengthening one's "will power," created a pathetic situation. For when the

scruples, the excessive drinking, the sexual sins and so on, continued, it was concluded that the clerical advice had not been heeded and that the troubled parishioner really wasn't trying. If the individual would put the advice into practice conscientiously, the problem would cease.

Sigmund Freud's contribution to understanding human problems and his insistence that many difficulties stem from man's unconscious strivings was questioned by the vast majority of clerics: Freud's apparent reduction of everything to sex was sharply criticized. Monsignor Pericle Felici, a member of the Commission of the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, gives us an illustration of the views held by most churchmen. In an article published in the official "Bulletin" for the Catholic clergy (April, 1952), the Monsignor warned that Catholics who submitted themselves to psychoanalysis expose themselves to mortal sin. He took exception particularly to Freud's doctrine that religious sentiments are a form of sexual sublimation:

> Therefore, religious sentiment would be a shameful instinct; charity would be instinct; Christian mortification would be instinct; every noble sentiment would be instinct. It is difficult to excuse from mortal sin anyone who, knowing all this, adapts this method of cure and eventually submits to it. The psychoanalytical method can easily become a school of corruption.[3]

While this position is extreme, and now recognized as such, it explains, in part, why clerical students in philosophy were not exposed to Freud. Even Carl Rogers, who revolutionized counseling during the mid-forties with his theory of client-centered counseling, was passed over in silence. To this day he still hasn't found a place in the typical seminary curriculum. On the other hand,

Thorndikean studies of reinforcement were explained in empirical and educational psychology, but their relationship to the behaviorist's view of counseling was never mentioned. From all appearances, seminary professors had not accepted on a practical level that "the Christian Apostle cannot be unmindful of science, especially of the psychological and sociological sciences."[4]

Psychiatrists and analysts have added to the apprehension of both churchmen and the laity. In all professions we find various personalities; and the field of psychiatry has had its share of people who are not adequately integrated themselves; individuals who do not recognize the limitations of the science, or persons with an inadequate philosophy of life, and often no religion at all. Certainly, they are in the minority, but these therapists have undoubtedly hurt the functional image of the counselor. Even at the present time, it is precisely this mental picture which looms up before the ecclesiastics who have it within their power to change the seminary curriculum, develop an awareness among their students of the field of counseling, and to provide counseling help for those in need.

In up-dating the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council decreed on October 28, 1965, that, in the training of priests, account should be taken of the more recent progress of the sciences.

> In general, those capabilities are to be developed in students, such as the ability to listen to others and to open their hearts and minds (empathy?) in the spirit of charity to the various circumstances and needs of men.[5]
>
> No opportune aids are to be overlooked which modern psychological and sociological research has brought to light.[6]

The Council Fathers certainly recognized that there are praiseworthy points in all the different approaches to helping people solve their problems. While no one particular theory was singled out, the quotation above indicates a keen awareness of Rogerian theory. It, more than any other, seems to be best suited to our needs, and best able to fit into the Christian view of man and his development. Far from degrading human nature by considering human beings only as measureable objects, the Rogerian view of man is quite consonant with the Christian ideal that man is just a little less than the angels, and not just a little better than Pavlov's ape. Rogers summarizes his thoughts on this point:

> One of the most revolutionary concepts to grow out of our clinical experience is the growing recognition that the innermost core of man's nature, the deepest layers of his personality, the base of his 'animal nature', is positive in nature - is basically socialized, forward-moving, rational and realistic.[7]

Carl Rogers, both as a therapist and theorist, has emphasized the importance of the self as the unifying and directing force in behavior and has stressed man's potential for self-definition and self-actualization. Most behavior patterns adopted by the organism are consistent with the concept of self. For adjustment, the self-concept must be generally congruent with all the experience of organism. Personality disorganization occurs when there is a high degree of incongruence between the concept of self and one's actual experience. Anxiety follows to a degree proportional to the extent to which the self-structure is under threat. If reintegration is to occur, threatening experiences must be explored, accurately symbolized in consciousness and integrated into the self-concept. Such

reintegration is greatly facilitated when the individual receives unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding from another person. Creating this situation is a goal of client-centered counseling.

A strong belief in the principle of democracy is a salient feature of Rogerian theory. That all men are created equal, that each individual should have the right to have his own opinions and that every man should be in control of his own destiny - we hold these truths to be self-evident and inalienable on a theoretical level. In practical life, however, most people believe that there are only two ways of doing something, "Their way and the wrong way." Rogers' insistence on the other hand, upon the total acceptance of client is surely more in accord with the American ideal of democracy; its importance as a necessary condition for therapeutic progress has been clearly established.

Creating such an atmosphere is as difficult as it is crucial. This is evident from Rogers' writings and certainly illustrated by his tape recordings and filmed interviews. Without such acceptance, the would-be-counselor looks in vain for techniques to apply to during the interpersonal relationship.

Carl Rogers himself has avoided listing step-by-step techniques to be followed. Rather, he maintains that, if certain conditions exist, then a definable process is set in motion which leads to certain changes in the client's personality and behavior. The essential point is the atmosphere of positive regard in which the counselor empathetically relates to the client as if he were the client, but without ever losing the "as if" condition; and the client progresses, through reflection and insight, toward becoming a more adequately functioning person.

It is enlightening to realize the deep personal insights a client experiences in the counseling relationship. In reading excerpts from various client-centered sessions, one could sense that the troubled client was, in reality, finding a solution to his problems; solutions and not temporary remedies. In this empathetic relationship, in an atmosphere of total acceptance lies the key to unlocking the troubled soul and allowing God's grace and nature to foster self-actualization and effect a behavioral change toward the positive.

Like a child in a toy shop, the neophyte may be carried away by the many impressive aspects of client-centered counseling and accept the theory without question. While I feel myself gravitating toward the Rogerian approach, I have not reached the stage where I feel intellectually secure. Apart from criticism raised by analytically and eclectically-oriented counselors, Carl Rogers' theory poses certain philosophical and theological difficulties. If misunderstood, Rogers' principle of self-actualization could be misinterpreted and classified as naturalistic. Naturalism, formulated first by the Stoic Zeno and later developed by Rousseau and Nietzsche, maintains that man is naturally good, but becomes infected by education and contact with other men. However, if returned to the pure state of nature, man will behave in an acceptable manner. Many theologians have condemned the tenets of this philosophy. In reading the words of Carl Rogers, one quite reasonably asks, "Who were the philosophers that influenced his thinking?" Furthermore, the Catholic Church's teachings concerning original sin and grace must be fit into the theoretical rationale before the priest is able to fully accept Rogerian theory as his personal approach to counseling. Even the principle

of democracy, moreover, as envisioned by Rogers, leaves many practical problems unsolved. As a child progresses toward socially acceptable goals, certainly he is not to have unlimited freedom. How is he to be handled during the struggle?

We feel there are answers to these questions and that they will be discovered as one gains a deeper knowledge and insight into Rogerian theory. It will take time, study and serious consideration, all of which points to the fact that becoming a counselor, like becoming a person, is not an easy task - not only from a practical standpoint but from an intellectual point of view. However, the first gigantic step has been taken; namely, dissatisfaction with the status quo and an effort to investigate the various theories of counseling. When a person realizes that people do not necessarily change because they have received the proper behavioral advice, and seeks to find new techniques for helping troubled souls, the great mental thaw has begun. Counseling has opened up a new horizon for this author. Although there are many intellectual hurdles to be removed before I become a counselor, a start has been made. It is impossible to return to the personally-gratifying, advice-giving position of the past. The movement must be forward, down the corridors of various counseling approaches until the goal is reached. The possibility of doing a lasting service for more people makes the intellectual struggle worthwhile. The spiritual reward will be invaluable.

REFERENCES

1. Hagmaier and Gleason. Counseling the Catholic. Sheed and Ward, New York, 1959.

2. Philip Hughes. The Church in Crisis: A History of the General Councils, 325-1870. Hanover House, New York, 1960, p. 320.

3. "Psychoanalysis - Good or Bad?" Editorial published in The Witness, Catholic newspaper for the Archdiocese of Dubuque, April, 1952.

4. Cardinal Tisserant, in Preface to Counseling in Catholic Life and Education, by C. A. Curran. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1952.

5. Pope Paul VI. "Decree on Priestly Training," Our Sunday Visitor. Huntington, Indiana, 1965, p. 2.

6. Ibid., p. 11

7. Carl R. Rogers. On Becoming a Person. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1961, p. 90.